DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 217 900 JC 810 432

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TITLE A Quartet of Change Guides.
INSTITUTION Clark Coll., Vancouver, Wash.
PUB DATE 21 Jul 81
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; *College Faculty; *College Planning; *Curriculum Development; Faculty College Relationship; Faculty Development; *Humanities; Program Development; Student Recruitment; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Morale; *Teacher Participation

ABSTRACT

Since spring 1979 numerous changes in Humanities offerings and operations have been discussed, agreed upon, and implemented at Clark College to revitalize enrollments and increase faculty energy levels. The process of change was based upon four principles: (1) the faculty perceived the need to change, wanted to explore the potential benefits of changing, and were willing to help initiate the changes; (2) the administration encouraged faculty-initiated change, provided resources necessary for a faculty retreat, and participated in discussions when invited; (3) ample opportunity was provided for faculty to air their concerns about proposed changes and to reach consensus in an open rational environment; and (4) a systematic marketing effort promoted the Humanities in general as well as specific new offerings. Among the activities and programs resulting from these efforts are the following: the formation of a lay advisory committee; the operation of a National Endowment for the Humanities consultancy; several new interdisciplinary courses; quarterly faculty seminars; a cross faculty resource bank; a cooperative work experience program in English Writing, Art, Graphics, and Photography; an Honors Degree Program; and the use of a modularized approach to the foreign language curriculum. These projects and others springing from the revitalization of faculty energy bode well for the future role of the Humanities at Clark. (AYC)

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A QUARTET OF CHANGE GUIDES

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July 21, 1981

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A QUARTET OF CHANGE GUIDES

In the Spring of 1979 the Humanities Division at Clark College (Vancouver, Washington) decided to undertake exploration of change in curriculum, to seek new sources of outside advice, and to look at existing audiences, modes of offerings, and their content. The hope was that this effort would result in a turn around of sagging Humanities enrollments and low energy levels in the faculty.

The beginnings of change began with a divisional retreat. Since that time many changes have taken place (see attached list). Out of these efforts several guidelines to change have emerged. The four most important follow.

1. Before significant change can take place the people who need to change must perceive the need, want to explore the potential benefits of changing, and be willing to help initiate change.

The inception of significant change in the Humanities at Clark College (Vancouver, WA) began in the faculty. Administrative hints and pressures did not elicit more than passively (even actively) aggressive responses. Such external exhortations pointing out the waning state of the Humanities had no effect. Only when these same perceptions found resonance in a few individuals in the faculty who began discussion with their colleagues did rapid, even radical change begin.

How then does the first motion happen? Faculty dedication, inquisitiveness, and expertise are the keys. At Clark the change sequence began from several sources:

1. ERIC articles about the current state of the Humanities and Humanities faculty, particularly those from the Center for the Study of Community Colleges;
2. Division Chairman initiation of discussion of forming a lay advisory committee and applying from an NEH consultancy grant;
3. An English faculty member's suggestion for an all divisional retreat to the Ashland Shakespearean Festival to discuss general problems, formation of a lay advisory committee, see some plays, and get to know colleagues better;
4. Administrative funding of the retreat from staff development funds.

Significantly, faculty perception of the problem resulted in a suggestion for concrete action. Administrative input on possible change advisory resources and commitment of money supported faculty initiative at the crucial juncture reinforcing faculty initiative.

2. Appropriate action modes for administrators are to encourage faculty who initiated change, to find necessary resources, and participate in discussions when invited.

The expenditure of a major amount of dollars to finance the retreat was crucial. This action spoke louder than any amount of verbal encouragement to the faculty. It proved that strengthening of Humanities was an important priority of the administration.

Throughout the changes effected at Clark money commitment served both as evidence of backing from the administration and inducement to faculty to use their creativity, energy, and expertise in ways exciting

to them.

Suggestion of other resources like NEH Consultancy and formation of a lay advisory comittee (both of which did happen) helped to provide external, expert, fresh resources that have helped and continue to help in the more than twenty projects* that have developed at Clark in the last two years.

3. All change must take place within a comfort zone.

Forced or precipitous change for which faculty as a whole has not developed a comfortable feeling will create animosity and dissension within the department or division. Ample opportunity structured to air concerns in an open rational environment has to be provided more than once.

At Clark discussions to form a lay advisory committee took place at several division meetings; way agreed upon by consensus at the retreat; but still required repeated re-discussion at division meetings even after the committee had been formed and initially met.

The desired decision mode was consensus. This was not as difficult as it might seem. First, since most proposals were generated from faculty sources, discussions centered on issues of substance amenable to rational discourse and compromise. Second, consensus was interpreted as lack of vocal opposition. Some who were not enthusiastic were willing to let a project proceed if others were enthusiastic.

Further, if the ideal of consensus provide impossible "critical mass" agreement did move some projects ahead. At some times full discussion had achieved virtual consensus with only one or two who would not agree.

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*See Attachment

Obstruction of a project agreed upon by the preponderate majority of the division was not allowed.

4. Insure tail end success with a systematic marketing effort.

Too many new courses have floundered after extensive faculty planning effort because no one enrolls. At Clark we have worked to promote the Humanities in general as well as pushing specific new offerings. At various times we have:

1) worked with general and specific program advisers to insure they know the what and why of new offerings

2) developed a system of faculty advisers to work with undecided students at registration

3) ran advertisements in the local newspaper

4) sent explanatory letters to targeted groups of students

5) written articles in local newspapers

6) written focus articles in the quarterly schedule

7) sent speakers from the enrollment office as well as specific Humanities departments to the local high schools

8) produced brochures for racks located on and off campus

9) held demonstrations at Clark College Week and on other special days

10) organized special events such as Jazz Festival, Dinner Theater, Foreign Language Festival at which programs are promoted

11) printed and distributed 8½ x 11 handbills promoting specific classes

These efforts mixed and matched as appropriate for each project and its timing have filled every new offering we have attempted. They have also kep the college community abreast of happenings in Humanities.

This has given the humanities a vital, innovative, does succeed profile that helps the change process as we move to tackle more intractable and thorny problems.

Summary

At Clark College during the last two years numerous changes in Humanities offerings and operations have been discussed, agreed upon and implemented. The process followed stemmed from faculty initiation and was supported administratively both verbally and with financial backing.

The modest amounts of money invested by the college in this revitalization effort have already more than repaid themselves. There has been a tremendous explosion of energy in the faculty. Projects deemed impossible dreams are being accomplished. New courses, special video projects and an array of other ideas springinf from an excited faculty bode well for the future role of the Humanities at Clark.

*ATTACHMENT

1. Formation of a lay advisory committee
2. Proposing and running an NEH consultancy
3. Offering new interdisciplinary courses:
   a. The Art of Being Human
   b. Music, Art, Theater and You
   c. Popular Culture
   d. Arts in the Community
4. Conducting quarterly faculty seminars on such topics as "Illness as Metaphor," "Social Darwinism," etc.
5. Establishing a cross faculty resource bank called "The Faculty Interchange"
6. Finding funding for paying modest honorariums to Faculty Seminar and Faculty Interchange participants
7. Forming a paid summer planning team to detail the new interdisciplinary courses at to content
   a. prepare a divisional brochure
   b. write a statement of purpose for the Humanities Division
   c. write grant proposal to the Washington State Humanities Project
8. Begin a cooperative work experience program in English, Writing, Art, Graphics, and Photography
9. Hire a student to write brochure copy for the division
10. Hold a joint all-day workshop between the Machine Industrial Technology and Humanities Divisions
11. Conduct a student surveying workshop
12. Run a student survey on a random sample of all Clark students
13. Receive funding for a grant proposal to form a state booking consortium
14. Undertake with the lay advisory committee the institution of an Honors Degree Program
15. Offer video courses in connection with programs such as "Shogun" and "Masada"

16. Initiate discussion for in-division evaluation of tenured faculty

17. Revamp of Foreign Language curriculum to modularized approach

18. Create a new fine arts curriculum in ceramics, glass, and bronze casting

19. Resusitate and expand the theater program

20. Begin exploration for follow-up studies of Clark graduates

21. New courses in general such as

    a. Film Appreciation

    b. Existentialism and the Modern Novel

    c. Credit for Travel to major art exhibits, etc.

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